

An Litir Bheag le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 249 (which corresponds to Litir 553). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Have you heard of Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia? She was in charge of Russia at the end of the 18th Century. She was powerful.

She liked plants. The Gael, John Fraser, got a contract from Catherine. That was for collecting plants for her in America. Fraser took American plants to Russia. And he took Russian plants to America. Among those was the cherry called Tartarian Cherry. When he was in America, he found Rhododendron catawbiense. He took that home with him to Britain. It was well received.

John was along with his son in America. He was also called John. On the way home, they went to Cuba. But Cuba was under Spanish control. Spain and Britain were at war with each other. The Governor found out the Frasers were British. But he didn't stop them. They were only collecting plants.

When John was over there, things changed in Russia. The Empress Catherine died. Her son, Paul, came to the throne. Fraser

An cuala sibh mu Chatrìona Uaibhreach, Ban-ìmpire na Ruis? Bha i os cionn na Ruis aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug. Bha i cumhachdach.

Bha i measail air lusan. Fhuair an Gàidheal, Iain Friseal, cùmhnant bho Chatrìona. Bha sin airson lusan a chruinneachadh dhi ann an Ameireagaidh. Thug Friseal lusan Ameireaganach don Ruis. Agus thug e lusan Ruiseanach a dh'Ameireagaidh. Am measg sin bha siridh ris an canar Tartarian Cherry. Nuair a bha e ann an Ameireagaidh, lorg e Rhododendron catawbiense. Thug e sin dhachaigh leis a Bhreatainn. Bha fèill mhòr air.

Bha Iain còmhla ri a mhac ann an Ameireagaidh. 'S e Iain an t-ainm a bha airsan cuideachd. Air an rathad dhachaigh, chaidh iad a Chiùba. Ach bha Ciùba fo smachd na Spàinne. Bha an Spàinn agus Breatainn ri cogadh an aghaidh a chèile. Fhuair an Riaghladair a-mach gun robh na Frisealaich Breatannach. Ach cha do chuir e stad orra. Cha robh iad a' dèanamh dad ach a' cruinneachadh lusan.

Nuair a bha Iain thall an sin, dh'atharraich cùisean anns an Ruis. Chaochail a' Bhan-ìmpire Catrìona.

<p><i>was thinking that Paul was still wanting the plants. But Paul wasn't alive for long. He was murdered. The new emperor was his son, Alexander.</i></p> <p><i>Alexander didn't have the same opinion about the plants. He wasn't willing to pay for them. Fraser had spent years. He expected to get a fortune from the Russians. But he got very little. He was unhappy.</i></p> <p><i>At the age of 57, he didn't have much money. He went one other time to America. He wanted to collect more plants. When he was in America he was on horseback. He fell. He didn't get much better. And he died in London a few months after that in 1811.</i></p>	<p>Thàinig an gille aice, Pòl, don rìgh-chathair. Bha Friseal a' smaoinichadh gun robh Pòl ag iarraidh nan lusan fhathast. Ach cha robh Pòl beò fada. Bha e air a mhurt. B' e an t-ìmpire ùr an gille aigesan, Alasdair.</p> <p>Cha robh Alasdair dhen aon bheachd mu na lusan. Cha robh e deònach pàigheadh air an son. Bha Friseal air bliadhnaichean a chur seachad. Bha e an dùil fortan a bhith aige bho na Ruiseanaich. Ach fhuair e glè bheag. Bha e mì-thoilichte.</p> <p>Aig aois caogad 's a seachd, cha robh mòran airgid aige. Chaidh e aon turas eile a dh'Ameireagaidh. Bha e airson tuilleadh lusan a chruinneachadh. Nuair a bha e ann an Ameireagaidh, bha e air muin eich. Thuit e. Cha do dh'fhàs e mòran na b' fheàrr. Agus chaochail e ann an Lunnainn beagan mhìosan às dèidh sin ann an ochd ceud deug is aon-deug (1811).</p>
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